

In SUPPORT OF THE FOLLOWING BILLS:
RAISED HB 6566 AN ACT CONCERNING THE COMPASSIONATE USE OF MARIJUANA
SB 1015 AN ACT CONCERNING THE PALLIATIVE USE OF MARIJUANA

Dear Judiciary Committee,

I am not a pot smoker but I am a cancer survivor and the mother of a young man whose life has been impacted by the harsh residue of marijuana laws.

In my battle to beat cancer, I did not have to suffer the pain and side of effects of chemotherapy though I suffer with pain every day. I take a medication now to keep my body cancer free and some of the side effects of that is sleeplessness, constant and sever arthritic pain, and stiffness in my joints. It has also caused me to have advanced osteoporosis, which adds to my discomfort. *Every morning I take arthritic strength Tylenol to get through my day and every night I take a prescription sleep med and muscle relaxer.*

The pain is not diminished and the sleep I get (when the medication works) leaves me groggy and lethargic. Other cancer survivors that I have made friends with through social support sights sometimes suggest that I should try marijuana for relief at night of the pain, to reduce my stress and to get a good night's rest so that I can awaken refreshed in the morning. These online friends do not live in Connecticut but in states where the use of palliative use of marijuana is accepted and legal. These same friends are dismayed and confused, as am I and other sufferers of chronic and debilitating diseases, that the state sanctions the use of addictive sleep medications and other narcotics to give me relief but not a natural and benign substance such as medical/palliative marijuana. There are times when the pain has become so intrusive to my every day functioning that my doctor will suggest a few days of Vicodine, Oxycodine or other narcotic and habit forming drugs to give my body and mind a release and break from sleeplessness and pain.

On those days, that I have elected to follow that protocol I am rendered almost immobile and incapacitated. On those days, my husband goes to work and comes home to cook and do daily chores. On those days, one of my sons stays with me to make sure I do not get hurt in the house trying to use the stairs or make food. On those days, I cannot really read a book or a magazine and if I do, I don't remember what I have read. On those days, I feel weak and sickly, helpless, and incoherent and later I feel resentful because I have lost another day of real life spent living in a cloud of a prescription medication haze.

There are those who would wonder why in the privacy of my own home I do not self medicate with marijuana especially at night so I can sleep, restore my bodies strength and health and reclaim my life at the start of a new day rested and ready to live as fully as possible. It is because I must choose. I must choose between the right to relieve my pain and suffering without the side effects of legal yet addicting and debilitating medication or my chances to work in the profession, I worked to earn my degree in and love. I hold Bachelors in Social Work and hope to soon be working on my Masters Degree. In the field that I have chosen to become part of and to study for, there are very few jobs that do not require drug tests before I may work for an agency or organization. When I begin working on my Masters Degree I will have to work in a field placement or if I should begin working at a Bachelor's level Social work job, I will pass a urine test. I may be sleep deprived, hung over from a sleep aid, taking a prescription pain killer, or decided to drink alcohol until the pain cannot be felt and I pass out the night before. Which are all things that can be impair my efficiency at a job, but I will pass a urine test because there will not be any marijuana found in my system. Moreover, that fact will make me an acceptable candidate for the job for which I may be hired for. Yet, should I choose to smoke or take palliative marijuana, to ease my pain or get some sleep, though I will have the same intelligence, the same qualities, and qualifications and no loss of ability due to impairment I would no longer be an acceptable candidate for the job or to be a Social Worker. In fact, the way our laws are stated now it would be questionable if I would even any longer be an acceptable and viable member of our society; especially if I should be stopped with my palliative marijuana in my car or on my person for any reason by an officer of the law.

On paper, at the very least I would no longer be the responsible woman who raised a son as a single mother, remarried and raised another son with in a successful marriage, never drank, or had any illegal violation of any significance beyond a parking ticket, survived cancer and earned a degree in social work.

Now, despite reason and logic I would have a mark on my record for an arrest and all my years of "good

standing” as a citizen would be wiped away. It would not matter what the reason or the amount was that I had this marijuana on me for. It would only matter that I had it and it would forever come up on my “permanent record” that I was no longer acceptable for many jobs and positions and certainly not qualified to be a social worker... and definitely not anyone’s care taker. In addition, it would all be because I wanted a good night’s sleep and a respite from a life of almost constant pain for the last two years.

In addition, may I just add on the subject of a “person being convicted of possession of marijuana not being a primary caregiver for a qualifying patient”? My eldest son is twenty-six years old. At the age of five, he was tested to be a bone marrow donor for his father. At the age of nine he helped me organize fund raisers to pay for his father’s bone marrow donor search; at the age of fourteen he was elected by his peers and teachers to represent his school at a MADD camp for peer mediation. At fifteen (after his father and I divorced), I was in an accident that left me with a shattered bone in my arm and unable to perform daily functions. My son went to school, came home, made dinner, did laundry, and helped me do my exercises to regain the strength and use of my arm. When he was seventeen, I had begun going to school and was working two jobs. My son worked as a camp councilor during the day and at a pizza shop at night. He gave me his paychecks and told me, Mom you shouldn’t work so hard. I can help.” At eighteen, he graduated high school and gave me away at my wedding. At nineteen, he was going to college, working and leading a slightly successful local band.

In 2008, he stood with me in my oncologist’s office while I was given my diagnosis and supported his stepfather, stepbrother and me through the painful emotional maze of our family’s struggle for me to survive. He was there to help nurse me back to health, take me to doctor appointments and take care of me when my husband or other son could not be home. Throughout 2008 and 2009, he also took time from his own schedule to drive me to school so I could finish my degree. While I was sick, I could not drive because of the physical restrictions and medications for pain. In the spring of 2009, he graduated with his Associates degree and won an award for writing. At this moment, he holds two jobs, which is why he is not here today to testify. In May, he will be twenty-seven years old... Oh yes, and when he was twenty-two he was arrested for having a joint on his person. At that time, he did not come to us, his parents to bail him out of trouble. Instead he acted responsibly and sold his own prized possession: a guitar, an amplifier, his video game machine and games, and used the money to pay his court fees and fines. He then took the assigned classes and completed them successfully. He has had no further arrests. My son has been my caregiver throughout his life. If I would ever need him to be a caregiver for my medicinal marijuana, I wouldn’t be able too.

Yet, this young man works two jobs because he is turned down for jobs that will move his future and finances along because when they run his personal and public records it shows that he was arrested for possession. He is deemed irresponsible and not a worthy citizen that can be trusted to do a good or respectful job. My son is not a criminal or irresponsible, he is a young man and trying to build a life. I am and would not be a criminal if I used marijuana, I would be a woman in pain trying to rebuild and regain my life. We are not alone; there are thousands like us. Please change our laws and let us live our lives pain free and in good standing. Please pass medical marijuana this session.

Thank you for your time.

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